

Message Text

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41

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 SAM-01

OMB-01 ACDA-05 OPIC-03 AF-06 EURE-00 IO-11 ARA-06

SIL-01 LAB-04 COME-00 /098 W
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P R 091744Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6286

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 1512

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS: COUP RUMORS ABOUND

REF: LISBON A165, MARCH 5, 1976

SUMMARY: THE INTENSIFYING ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS PRODUCED A SPATE OF COUP RUMORS, MANY OF THEM SELF-SERVING. RUMORS TO DATE HAVE LACKED SUBSTANCE WHEN CLOSELY INVESTIGATED. END SUMMARY.

1. THE INTENSIFYING ELECTION CAMPAIGN HAS PRODUCED A SPATE OF COUP RUMORS, MANY OF THEM SELF-SERVING:

-- AZORES: THE AZOREAN CDS CLAIMED THAT THE LEFT WOULD TRIGGER
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AN ATTEMPT AGAINST PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES DURING HIS MEETING

WITH TITO IN THE AZORES NEXT WEEK. THE OBJECT WOULD BE TO DESTROY THE AZOREAN LIBERATION FRONT AND DISCREDIT THE PPD AND CDS IN THE AZORES.

-- LEFT WING COUP: THERE ARE A NUMBER OF RUMORS OF A LEFT WING COUP ATTEMPT IN THE NEXT WEEK OR TWO, BUT VIRTUALLY NO FACTS ARE MENTIONED. JUSTICE MINISTER YESTERDAY EXPRESSED WORRY TO AMBASSADOR BUT OFFERED NOTHING CONCRETE. ONE THEORY IS THAT THE LEFT IS TRYING AGAIN TO BAIT THE RIGHT.

-- CUBANS: STORIES ABOUT LARGE NUMBERS OF CUBAN AGITATORS IN PORTUGAL HAVE DIED DOWN AS EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE ALLEGATIONS HAS NOT COME FORTH. BOTH PPD CHIEF SA CARNEIRO AND AIR FORCE CHIEF MORAIS DA SILVA HAVE FOUND IT USEFUL TO LEND CREDENCE TO THE CUBAN THREAT.

-- POST ELECTION COUP BY LEFT: ARMA HAS BEEN TOLD BY PORTUGUESE ARMY SOURCE THAT CONTINGENCY PLANNING IS UNDER WAY TO COUNTER A POST-ELECTION COUP BY THE LEFT SHOULD THE CDS OBTAIN A SUBSTANTIAL VOTE.

2. "REPUBLICA" RETURNED: THE NOTORIOUS CASE OF THE NEWSPAPER "REPUBLICA" MOVED QUIETLY TOWARDS RESOLUTION. AFTER TEN MONTHS OF OCCUPATION BY FAR LEFT WORKERS, "REPUBLICA" FACILITIES WERE TURNED OVER TO THE OWNERS UNDER A DECREE OF THE MINISTER OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS. MANAGEMENT HAD STEADFASTLY REFUSED TO BARGAIN WITH WORKERS FOLLOWING THE NEWSPAPER'S SUSPENSION ON DEC 23.

3. OTELO: FORMER COPCON COMMANDER MAJ OTELO SARAIVA DE CARVALHO MADE HIS FIRST PUBLIC APPEARANCE SINCE RELEASE FROM PRISON MARCH 4. OTELO WAS AT THE ARMED FORCES GENERAL STAFF TO DISCUSS HIS STATUS OF CONDITIONAL RELEASE, BUT DECLINED TO TALK WITH THE PRESS.

4. PIDE: 376 FORMER PIDE (SECRET POLICE) AGENTS WERE RELEASED FROM PRISON DURING THE WEEK OF MARCH 1. THIS REDUCES THE NUMBER OF PIDE AGENTS STILL IMPRISONED TO APPROXIMATELY 400 (REFTEL).

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5. COMMENT: WITH ANNIVERSARY OF MARCH 11, 1975 ABORTIVE COUP ALMOST UPON US, RUMORS OF ANOTHER COUP ARE NOT UNEXPECTED. HOWEVER, WHEN CLOSELY CHECKED, RUMORS HAVE LACKED SUBSTANCE -- UNLIKE THE SITUATION PREVAILING BEFORE MARCH 11 WHEN EMBASSY WAS AWARE OF SERIOUS COUP PLANNING BY SEVERAL DIFFERENT GROUPS. SOME OF THE RUMORS ARE UNQUESTIONABLY PROPAGATED FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

6. THE FACT THAT ARMY, POLICE, AND PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE HAVE
ALL QUERIED EMBASSY OFFICERS ABOUT POSSIBLE COUPS AND
ESPECIALLY ABOUT CUBAN PRESENCE SUGGESTS THAT GOVERNMENT --
WHILE NERVOUS -- ALSO LACKS SOLID PROOF OF COUP PLANNING.
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